

BATISTA CONFIDENT OF ABILITY TO RULE

Former Sergeant, Now Cuba's
Chief of Staff, Says Men
Are With Him.

HE ENJOYS HIS TRIUMPH

New Colonel Plans 'Soldiers'
Army,' Small and With No
General Staff.

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HAVANA, Sept. 12.—After having seen a former army Captain of aviation acting as drink-mixer at the bar of the Hotel National, the regular bartender being on strike, I had pointed out to me former Sergeant of Aviation Chavez who is now wearing a Captain's bars. These are some of the contrasts of present-day Cuba.

The officers at the Hotel National may be well armed, but at present Colonel Fulgencio Batista, former sergeant, has command of all headquarters posts, barracks, arms, material, ships and stations of the Cuban Army and Navy, although ten days ago, as a stenographer in the army, he dutifully answered the buzzer to take notes for a general staff officer.

In the office of the Cuban Chief of Staff, his busy successor has had no time to remove the pictures on the walls left by General Alberto Herrera, Machado's Secretary of War and Chief of Staff. Former King Alfonso of Spain has a place between Marshals Foch and Joffre, and there is a signed portrait of General Charles F. Summerall when he was Chief of Staff of the American Army.

Inside Story Heard.

Colonel Batista occupies the adjoining room as his office and makes the old Chief of Staff's room a rendezvous for his personal guards, who carry sub-machine guns and accompany him in a big automobile. It is also the waiting room for those having appointments.

Here one hears inner circle talk and reasons for the revolt. There was, it appears, no promotion for

soldiers from the ranks, and no chance for them to go to officers' school. Commissions were reserved for sons of officers and favored families. Many officers were very corrupt and hard on the men. A thousand fictitious names of privates were carried on the army lists, and Machado's favorites pocketed the pay. Of their \$24 a month they had left only \$19 after pension fund and other deductions. They hoped, if the country could bear it, that the new government would raise their pay to net \$24 again.

Again, they found undesirable Colonels and staff officers still serving under President de Cespedes, and so they determined to put them out and make the army democratic, with the door of opportunity open.

For the moment, Colonel Batista holds the most powerful position of any man in Cuba. Order depends upon his holding the soldiers together. He is 32 years old and was born in Oriente, the province which is called the mother of revolutions, of poor parents.

Batista entered the infantry at 22, became a corporal, studied stenography and became a sergeant doing office work for the general staff. Sturdily built, with black hair brushed back and a small, flat-tish nose, though he may have no Chinese blood he has a suggestion of Chinese in his face. His face, however, is very lively and expressive.

Seated at his desk, his quick, roving eyes flashed recognition to numerous soldiers who appeared in the room and then passed out in the midst of a continuous reception. His legs never ceased their nervous dancing movements and his hands were never still. He denied the officers' statement that the sergeants had told them they would be back in power in two or three hours.

Batista said that in organizing his revolt he picked one man in each post or company, who picked another who could be trusted, and so on, and then it only remained for the signal to be given when the hour arrived. He was taking back officers he wanted.

"How many have returned?" he was asked.

"Four hundred," he replied, which is more than the 300 at the Hotel National if his statement can be accepted.

Fulgencio Batista himself has a polite manner, and he grinned when he said he would be as polite as his former chiefs. I asked him if he did not think that in a test many of his privates would support the former officers in loyalty to old associations. He said:

"Never. They are a solid bloc against the old régime."

When I mentioned the view heard from officers at the Hotel National that they never would serve under him as Colonel, and asked him in case the situation demanded that he should yield up his rank, what he would do, he replied:

"Our men would never permit me to. I did not want to be Colonel. The junta and my comrades insisted I should be. There will be no Majors or Lieutenant Colonels or Colonels in the new army, which

will be reduced two-thirds. We will do away with the general staff and the high officers in our soldiers' army."

Having remarked on his very swift rise in rank and to mighty responsibilities, I asked him with a view of sounding his military knowledge and the extent of his study who was his favorite military leader in history.

"I have none," he said. "All military leaders reached their high place through butchery."

"After the first period of enthusiasm is over, will you be able to keep order?" he was asked.

"Yes," he said.

I asked if he would give orders to shoot in case of violent disorder.

"I hope that I will not have to," he replied, "but I will if I have to."

Batista is plainly enjoying his triumph, his rank and his power, and living so fast he has not had time to ask if he is in a dream or not, when he is, sure he is making the dream come true.